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TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN THE CONTEXT OF
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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Abstract: The article examines the modernization of the agricultural sector as a key component of sustainable economic growth and rural development. It focuses on the evolution of agricultural production, structural changes between plant and animal sectors, and the transformation of farm types and cultivated areas. The analysis explores productivity trends, technological progress, and the factors influencing the competitiveness of agriculture in a changing climate. Special attention is given to the relationship between agricultural performance, rural employment, and export potential, as well as to the role of innovation and digitalization in enhancing efficiency. The findings highlight that modernization of agriculture requires a balanced approach that integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions, promoting resilience, resource efficiency, and long-term sustainability of the rural economy.



Introduction

The study examines not only the evolution of agricultural production and the distribution between plant and animal sectors but also the structural reconfiguration of farms, diversification of exports, and growing integration of renewable energy in rural areas. Particular attention is given to how these developments align with European agricultural policies, which emphasize innovation, fair trade, and environmental sustainability.

In 2026, Moldova's agriculture is forecast to be approximately 13% of the country's GDP, providing constant support for other economic sectors. This sector has great prospects for the future, this will be driven by investments that will continue to develop and contribute to the creation of a sustainable and long-term agricultural sector. The main types of financing include government subsidies, low-interest loans, European grants and non-refundable funds for environmentally friendly technologies.

The National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development for 2023-2030 directly contributes to the objectives of the "European Moldova 2030" strategy and the UN Agenda 2030, strengthening the pro-European direction of agricultural development, and this RM-EU association facilitates the harmonization of standards, access to European markets and technical and financial cooperation. The major strategic objectives of this strategy are :

1. Strengthening the resilience of the agricultural sector to climate change,
2. Promoting smart and sustainable agricultural practices,
3. Developing the internal market and increasing export potential,
4. Stimulating sustainable rural socio-economic development.

Material and method

The methodological framework of this study was designed to ensure a balanced and reliable assessment of the modernization and sustainability of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova within the European integration process.

The research combined quantitative and qualitative methods, allowing a complex interpretation of statistical trends, structural transformations, and development perspectives.

The empirical basis relied on official data from the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova for the years 2016–2024, complemented by reports of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, Eurostat, FAO, and analytical studies from European programs and national strategies such as the "European Moldova 2030" and the "National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development 2023–2030." These sources ensured data accuracy and comparability with the European context.

Despite minor limitations caused by incomplete data for 2025, triangulation across multiple sources strengthened the credibility of the conclusions. Overall, the chosen methodology integrated economic, technological, and environmental perspectives, providing a solid basis for evaluating the sustainability and modernization of Moldova's agriculture in line with European objectives.

Results and discussions

It is important to note that the Republic of Moldova, like most countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, faces mainly economic and social challenges in the agricultural sector. These include the low level of farmers' incomes, the need for additional investments to modernize agricultural technologies, insufficiently developed infrastructure and major disparities between rural and urban areas.

These problems limit the competitiveness of the sector and its ability to adapt quickly to the demands of the modern market. In contrast, countries in North-Western Europe, such as the Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium and Denmark, although they have advanced and well-financed agricultural systems, face a different type of challenges, especially of an ecological nature. For these countries, the main difficulties are related to the reduction of emissions from agriculture and the expansion of areas cultivated according to organic farming standards.

In this context, the Republic of Moldova, although making considerable efforts to align itself with European requirements and standards, faces significant costs to catch up with more developed European states. The situation is comparable to that of Ukraine, which is in a similar process of adaptation. The implementation of European policies and standards in agriculture requires significant financial, institutional and technological resources, and the transition cannot be achieved at an accelerated pace without adequate support.

In this regard, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the essential instruments to which the Republic of Moldova must pay special attention. Alignment with the principles and mechanisms of the CAP not only facilitates the modernization of the agricultural sector, but also contributes to sustainable development, increased competitiveness and gradual integration into the European market. Therefore, compliance with and implementation of these guidelines becomes crucial for the advancement of the agricultural sector and the reduction of differences with mature agricultural economies in the European Union.

The objectives and requirements of the CAP, which Moldova must progressively adopt, include:

- Ensuring fair and stable incomes for farmers;
- Promoting environmentally friendly practices;
- Strengthening rural development;
- Encouraging innovation and digital transformation;
- Enhancing food safety and product quality;
- Improving resilience to climate change;
- Support young farmers.

Conclusions

Moldovan agriculture faces several structural challenges, including limited infrastructure, restricted access to advanced technologies, and increasing climate variability. Nevertheless, the sector also presents substantial opportunities for growth, particularly through innovation and modernization.

Although the Republic of Moldova is a small country, the efficient and strategic use of agricultural land can significantly enhance productivity. Furthermore, knowledge exchange with European Union member states, combined with EU financial support, can facilitate the development of a more competitive agricultural sector.

This could enable Moldova to reduce its dependence on imports and expand its export capacity, thereby contributing to a stronger and more resilient national economy.

Future research could focus on examining the modern technologies applied in EU agriculture, identifying which of these practices and tools have already been adopted in Moldova and which remain absent.

Such analysis would help outline practical pathways for accelerating progress and increasing the sustainability and competitiveness of the country's agricultural sector.